



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 22, 2017

University Student Punished for Presenting Both Sides of Gender-neutral Pronoun Debate

A Canadian university has disciplined a graduate student for evenhandedly presenting both sides of the debate over the use of “gender-neutral” pronouns because allowing the opposition to be heard created a “toxic climate” for some students.

According to [LifeSiteNews](#), Lindsay Shepherd, 22, a master’s student at Ontario’s Wilfrid Laurier University, serves as a teaching assistant for a class called “Canadian Communication in Context.” Not long ago, during a lecture on gendered language, she played a five-minute clip of a debate between University of Toronto psychology professor Jordan Peterson, who refuses to use newfangled pronouns like “zhe,” and his colleague, transgender studies professor Nicholas Matte. The discussion had been broadcast on Ontario’s public television station while Parliament was debating adding “gender expression” and “gender identity” to the nation’s hate-crimes law. That statute, known as Bill C-16, became law in June.

Last week, Shepherd was called into the university’s Gendered Violence Prevention and Support office, where acting manager Adria Joel, program coordinator Herbert Pimlott, and communications studies assistant professor Nathan Rambukkana lectured her on the evils of allowing politically incorrect viewpoints to be heard.

Fortunately, Shepherd had the foresight to record the session surreptitiously, which is legal in Ontario. The officials’ remarks bear out critics’ contentions that Bill C-16 would have a chilling effect on free speech.

The officials told Shepherd that one or more students had complained that playing the Peterson-Matte video had created a “toxic climate” in the class. They would not state the exact number of students who had complained, nor would they give Shepherd the details of the complaint(s).

Joel took things a step further, telling Shepherd that presenting Peterson’s viewpoint had caused “harm and violence” to “trans folk,” who are apparently so frail that merely hearing something they don’t like is akin to being physically assaulted.

Shepherd explained that when students “leave the university, they’re going to be exposed to these ideas, so I don’t see how I’m doing a disservice to the class by exposing them to ideas that are really out





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there.”

Joel said Shepherd was violating the school’s gendered and sexual violence policy by targeting transgender students. Shepherd, quite naturally, argued that she hadn’t targeted anyone since she presented both sides of the debate neutrally.

Rambukkana, however, claimed that simply allowing Peterson’s views to be heard without prior criticism was “legitimizing this as a valid perspective.”

“At a university, all perspectives are valid,” Shepherd countered, to which Rambukkana shot back, “That’s not necessarily true.” Then he whipped out the tired, old ace up his sleeve: “This is like neutrally playing a speech by Hitler.”

Shepherd protested that she does not even agree with Peterson, so she clearly was not trying to impose his views on her students. She again insisted that she played the video without taking sides in the debate, to which one official said, “That’s part of the problem.”

Rambukkana argued that even permitting Peterson’s opinion to be heard in class violated Bill C-16. Shepherd should at least have introduced the video with a warning that Peterson’s view was “problematic,” he said.

Shepherd maintained that doing so would have stifled academic freedom because it would have “silenced” some students. That, of course, is the point: shutting down debate on matters that the Left has already decided for the rest of us.

According to *National Post* columnist [Christie Blatchford](#), Pimlott “at one point expressed amusement at the way Peterson characterized the left as being in power in academia and ‘you’re going to be in prison’ if you don’t use people’s preferred pronouns.” Pimlott and his colleagues, she observed, “were oblivious to the fact that they themselves were proving him right.”

Shepherd told Blatchford she is “about 70-percent sure” she’ll be leaving the university at the end of the semester, and who could blame her?

Although university President and Vice-Chancellor Deborah MacLatchy, after listening to the recorded conversation, has since [apologized](#) to Shepherd and Rambukkana has even issued a half-apology, Shepherd isn’t fooled.

“Moral of the story: A university must be repeatedly publicly shamed, internationally, in order to apologize (oh, but keep the task force & investigation),” she [tweeted](#). “Even then, ambiguous about free speech. Also, make sure to secretly record all meetings or they won’t take you seriously.”

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